

WHAT A MAIL HAUL!

Stamp treasures coming to Javits

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After hundreds of years, the humble postage stamp has yet to be licked.

More than 50,000 stamp lovers are expected to flock to the Javits Center for a once-in-a-decade gathering that begins Saturday, when the World Stamp Show opens.

The eight-day event will feature auctions, booths where visitors can buy and sell stamps, seminars on collecting and displays of rare postage including the

world's most expensive stamp.

The free show is designed to celebrate stamps and ignite a passion for collecting, said Steven J. Rod, vice president of the show.

Rod said he remembers the excitement of getting a stamp from Egypt when he attended the show in 1956 at age 11.

"The world has changed, but the stamp collecting values are still there in terms of the thrill of the hunt, of learning what's on the stamps," he said.

Here are some highlights:



The billionaire's collection

Bill Gross amassed a collection worth \$150 million, inspired by a worthless pile of postage saved by his mother.

She would regularly buy sheets of stamps at the post office, hoping she could cash them in to fund her son's college education. The day of reckoning came in 1961.

"Four dealers basically said they weren't worth the paper they were printed on because they were so common," Gross (inset) recalled.

Fortunately, he received a scholarship to Duke University and went on to be a founder of the investment management giant Pimco. In 1993, he plunked down \$29,000 on a 13-cent stamp from 1860.

"I wanted to prove that my mom had a good idea," he said.

Gross, 72, has begun selling off his collection. The 77 items auctioned on May 29 include an envelope mailed in 1857 with stamps from Hawaii and the US (right), which could go for \$500,000. He'll also display a 2-cent Hawaiian "missionary" stamp (above), worth some \$2 million.



John Lennon

Before he was a Beatle, the Liverpool lad had one album no one ever heard — his stamp album.

His philatelist life started at age 9 after a cousin gave him a stamp album to help him with geography.

Lennon made notations on a number of stamps, and on the title page of his "Mercury" stamp album, he embellished illustrations of Queen Victoria and King George VI with a blue-ink beard and mustache (above). Show visitors can view the album.



Priciest postage

It took six decades and \$9.5 million, but shoe magnate Stuart Weitzman finally completed his boyhood stamp album when he purchased the world's rarest piece of postage (left) in 2014.

Weitzman will display his 1856 British Guiana One-Cent Magenta, the only one in existence, at the show.

